The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Some Unexplored Kleindienst Matters

By Jack Anderson

The Senate Judiciary Committee shut off the hearings on the Richard Kleindienst flap without exploring his role in a number of Justice Department cases.

Meanwhile, he is awaiting final Senate action on his nomination to be Attorney General.

Not only did he set in motion the machinery that led to the settlement of the celebrated anti-trust case against International Telephone and Telepgraph, but he also reportedly had a hand in some other big cases that escaped Senate scrutiny. For example:

• There were rumblings in the Justice Department about filing an antitrust case against the New York Stock Exchange. Hans R. Reinisch, head of a stockholders association, has given us an affidavit swearing that Justice attorneys had indicated to him they favored a suit. But they said it was a "political decision" which higher Justice officials would have to make. No such suit was ever filed.

In a case involving General Motors' pollution of the Hudson River GM's special counsel, Lawrence Walsh, carried a letter of complaint for Kleindienst to Washington about the prosecutor in the case. The prosecutor was fired, although Kleindienst insists that it was at his instigation. Walsh is the same influential attorney who wrote "Dear Dick" letter to Kleindienst urging settlement of the ITT case.

• In 1971, a federal court ruled that a law forbidding any single party from owning more than 160 acres of federally-watered land did not apply to vast sections of California's Imperial Valley. The Justice Department, instead of appealing the dubious ruling, let it die. Some California conservationists have now charged that Kleindienst prevented the U.S. Attorney in San Diego from appealing, much to the delight of the giant farm conglomerates.

• The Justice Department has delayed prosecution of another giant antitrust case against International Business Machines that controls over 70 per cent of the computer market. Hints have leaked out of the back rooms that Kleindienst and company are dragging their feet.